

Hell's Kitchen South: Developing Strategies

An investigation of urban design and planning for New York City

November 18 – December 23, 1999

Opening reception Thursday, November 18, 1999, 6–8 PM

Organized by Design + Urbanism
Design Trust for Public Space
Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Association

Projects by Ana Florez – Cecilia Benites
Brian McGrath / Team A-UD
BriggsKnowles architecture + design
Brooklyn Architects Collective
Columbia Architecture
David Rockwood and Claudia Dias
Inline Studio
Life in Hell
Marpillero Pollak Architects
Re-Imagining Hell's Kitchen South
Sommer and Miller Architecture and Planning
studio a/b
Todd MacDonald

Symposium

December 16, 1999, 6 PM, at Jacob Javits Center.
Topics will include evaluation of project to date,
recommendations from Design Study, the future...
Call 212 695-2432 x14 for more information.

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Hell's Kitchen South: Developing Strategies

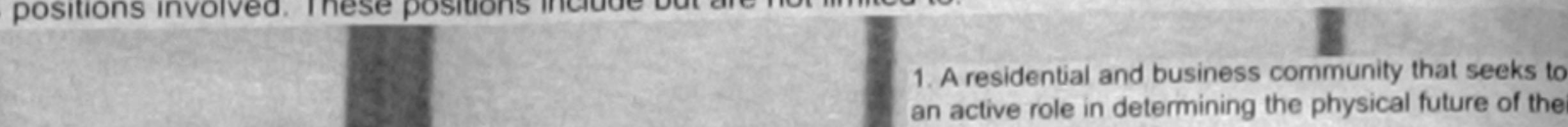
issue of development in one neighborhood of New York City. In doing this, it touches the many groups that are traditionally involved in development, from residents to public officials to planning and design professionals to investors, and tries to connect them in new and productive ways. Perhaps the most challenging and ultimately most important aspect of this project is the development of working relationships between groups which not only have different interests, but often speak different languages. The following description of *Developing Strategies* is organized around the different constituencies it hopes to engage. However, by addressing different audiences in separate sections, the intention is not to direct each reader to a specific section, but to give an appreciation of how these different interests can coexist productively. The success of this project depends on a rigorous appreciation of the various positions involved. These positions include but are not limited to:

The Project
Developing Strategies builds upon work initiated five years ago by the Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Association (HKNA), a group of residents working to have an active voice in determining the future of their neighborhood. Over the years HKNA has organized and established working relationships with the Port Authority and the Javits Center – the two largest institutions and land owners in the area. In 1988 HKNA approached the Design Trust for Public Space (D+U), a nonprofit organization that funds and manages studies of public space and architecture in New York City. Together they decided to organize a conference aimed at further involving the Hell's Kitchen South community in envisioning and planning for the future of their neighborhood.

HKNA and D+U approached Design + Urbanism (D+U), an urban design firm, to help organize and program the Conference. To further the goals of the conference, D+U proposed a longer-term Design Study to explore specific ways that Hell's Kitchen South might change. The Conference and Workshop, which took place on June 12, 1988 at the Javits Center, provided an interactive setting where residents, urban planners, designers, developers, public health specialists and public officials worked together to develop planning and design ideas for the community. The Conference provided an abundance of concerns, ideas, and materials to inform more detailed study.

To perform the Design Study, D+U, HKNA and DTPS invited thirteen Design Teams to participate based on their range of experience and commitment to community-based work. The Teams were asked to develop the design implications of specific issues raised at the conference; they were encouraged to think at multiple scales and to focus on both long term and short term possibilities. The goal was to provide an array of concrete, viable recommendations for the neighborhood that could help inform their discussions with the city and private developers. Developing Strategies will serve as the first public exhibition and hearing for these proposals.

On December 16 at the Javits Center, in collaboration with HKNA, DTPS and Community Board 4, D+U will host a symposium to discuss the findings and offer a range of recommendations based on the proposals of the design teams. The symposium will examine how the planning and design process has worked and will explore what HKNA's next steps might be. By the end of this year, D+U will submit a final report to HKNA that synthesizes the design and planning ideas of all the participants and offers a series of growth and development scenarios.



1. A residential and business community that seeks to have an active role in determining the physical future of their neighborhood.

2. A planning and design community interested in effective and innovative ways of working in cities to better adapt them for their users.

3. A community of city managers who are responsible for determining parameters such as zoning, maintaining facilities such as tunnels and parks, and negotiating the interests of various private agents.

4. A broader community of citizens who are interested in the future of their city.

This exhibition will ideally be a point of intersection for at least the four groups listed above: city planners will bump into community activists, architecture students will strike up conversations with local officials. However, it would be presumptuous to assume that at any time the stakes and goals of these various constituencies will converge.

The Community

While most communities, especially those in New York City, logically have significant interest in the make-up and development of their neighborhoods, the efforts of HKNA have come at a crucial time in the history of Hell's Kitchen South. It is apparent from a multitude of signs that midtown development is fast approaching from the east. Facing inevitable change, *Developing Strategies* asks how this community can embrace and have a hand in steering the process of development.

Hell's Kitchen South is not pretty. To many eyes, it is a fragmented image of roads, overpasses, spaces and buildings that weave in and out of the city's grid. Bordering on three sides by the Port Authority Bus Terminal, the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center and the sunken railyards of Penn Central and pinned at the core by the Lincoln Tunnel, the neighborhood has a strange, mottled texture and sensibility. Packed between these massive regional institutions lies a bewildering array of lots, apartments, tenements, small offices and manufacturers, stores, restaurants, parking lots, taxi repair shops, gas stations and empty lots. However, this heterogeneous landscape does not need to be cleaned up, filled-in, covered-over or replaced. Judging from opinions voiced by the people who live and work in Hell's Kitchen South—who initiated this entire project—they not only like its quality, but want more of it.

By refusing to play the usual game whereby private and public interests compete in the arenas of policy and politics to meet their separate goals, HKNA hopes not just to oppose undesirable change, but to encourage unexplored alternatives and bold innovation. *Developing Strategies* explores ways to promote development that not only preserves existing communities but creates new kinds of residential and business opportunities.

Design Trust + Urbanism
A private not-for-profit organization, the Design Trust for Public Space was founded in order to establish a means by which those concerned with improving public space could tap into and benefit from the wealth of professional design resources in the city. These resources – talented architects, urban planners, landscape architects and other professionals – are the trust we maintain for the benefit of the city. The Design Trust has sponsored projects in such diverse areas as city streets, community gardens, environmentally sustainable design, and streetscape improvements.

Design for Public Space
A private not-for-profit organization, the Design Trust for Public Space is dedicated to improving the quality and understanding of public space in New York City. The Design Trust was founded in order to establish a means by which those concerned with improving public space could tap into and benefit from the wealth of professional design resources in the city. These resources – talented architects, urban planners, landscape architects and other professionals – are the trust we maintain for the benefit of the city. The Design Trust has sponsored projects in such diverse areas as city streets, community gardens, environmentally sustainable design, and streetscape improvements.

Design Trust + Urbanism
An urban design group committed to creatively addressing the social and cultural complexities of the city through a collaborative process that includes community organizations, public agencies and private builders. Viven Braimbart, Michael Conard, Richard Ruiz, and David Smiley, have done widely recognized work in housing, urban design and theory, and community studies showing that site-specific design solutions emerging from open debate can sustain a more equitable and beautiful city.

The Design Teams

Ana Fieroz - Cecilia Bentires
BRUGGKNOWLES architecture + design Laura Bugs, Lina Cassel, Andrea Gaffney, Rayna Huber, James Khansari, Jonathan Knowles, Erik Schulz.

Brooklyn Architects Collective Project Team: Heather Roslund, Laura Fink, Lisa Iulo, John Cunniffe, David Boyle, A.J. Loebner, Jason Mosquera, Michele Bertomeni, Christine Ling.

David Rockwood and Claudia Das with contributions from Peter Kempf and Malay Shaw
Online Studio Tim Culbert & Cecilia Irimey Project team: Anthony Arnold, Jenny Chung, Anna Friedrich, Serge Gallois, Camille Giulian, Eli Keidan, Jason Kim, Gantcha Miles, Adrian Wu.

Life in Hell Sean Flynn, Sarah Crozier, Brad Crook, Marilliro Polak, Architects Santo Marilliro and Linda Polak, ABS Scarsogianom, Manana Marion, Paul Teng

Re-Imagining Hell's Kitchen South Susana Barré, Graphic Designer Adam Brown, Maritime Consultant Mela Brunzual, Architect HKS Resident John Beavell, Waterfront Park Advocate, Mandy Fullilove, MD, Public Health, Vera Lightstone, Artist HKS Resident Ayo Moon, Biologist Natural History Interpreter, Leni Schwerdinger, Artist/Designing Designer Ken Smith, Landscape Architect Sommer and Miller, Architecture and Planning Richard Sommer, Laura Miller with Marshall Brown, Hendra Bong, Todd MacDonald

Exhibit and Production Design
CUP Damon Rich with Jason Anderson

Studio 1b Hidaki Antzini, RA, Glynn Berry, RA, Somer and Miller, Architecture and Planning Richard Sommer, Laura Miller with Marshall Brown, Hendra Bong, Todd MacDonald

Team AUD Brian McGrath, Brian Mu, Joyce Ip, Herby Buldinga, Dean Clancy, Rita Kuang, William Kenworthy, Maya Watanabe, Hiroshi Mizutani, Edi Larson

Todd Mac Donald

U Studio Benoit & Caroline Bois, Project leaders: Olaf Giese, Tobias Walser

The Designers and the Planners

To the urban planner and designer, Hell's Kitchen South presents both an engaging topic for study and a challenging space for intervention. The area is a veritable museum of massive interventions that have benefited the larger metropolis at local expense: the Lincoln Tunnel, opened in 1936 and expanded in 1954, the Port Authority, opened in 1950 and expanded in 1963 and 1981 and the Javits Center, opened in 1984 and currently contemplating expansion. The neighborhood also serves as parking lot and service facility for midtown. Each of these institutions plays a vital role for the city at large, while having a sometimes neutral, oftentimes intrusive and noxious effect on the local community. This is a clear challenge to professionals who deal with the design of cities: how can this be made to work better?

The result of these colossal urban devices, the odd buildings, different types of housing, locally-owned shops and juxtaposed left-over spaces that make up Hell's Kitchen South is that it has none of the genteel allure of other Manhattan neighborhoods that have made them targets for earlier gentrification. Neither does the community have a predominant building type uniquely suited to one kind of new use. In other words, the very factors that make the area seem so chaotic and enigmatic are the same features that might enable area to be the ground for inventing a different kind of urban future.

Of course, the urban professionals involved with *Developing Strategies* have not operated in a formal vacuum. They have the challenge of bringing their expertise and experience to a productive compromise with the desires and objectives expressed by the community. Historically, this relation has not always been an easy one, and *Developing Strategies* also serves as a study of this evolving partnership.

The City Managers

The regional urban infrastructure of Hell's Kitchen South can be understood as indicative of a particular historical attitude towards city management. In the service of a rapid and heroic modernization, these structures were installed with little regard for supporting local needs or infrastructure. Today, the process of executing large scale projects from waste management to ballparks has become far more complex. Beyond this, existing facilities are in need of updating and retooling: the Lincoln Tunnel and its jumble of access routes expect a 10% increase in traffic this year over the usual twenty-five million cars, and the Javits Center claims it must expand to remain competitive with the convention facilities of other cities. How will these necessary changes interact with the escalating real estate market, not to mention the local community? *Developing Strategies* is intended to examine new methods for dealing with these urban issues; this is one way it aims at citywide significance.

The Rest of Us

Many disciplines from political science to urban planning devote time to considering the question of how the design of the built environment should be determined. By attempting to engage a variety of audiences, this exhibit presents different views of what a city should be, and how that city should be achieved. The exhibit also attempts to show the many strategies used to form a city, from the design of individual buildings to zoning laws to tree planting campaigns. Thus, *Developing Strategies* aims to form new audiences, to increase the number of citizens actively involved in their surroundings, and to create a more dynamic and diverse built environment.

The Product and Implementation

The solution offered by *Developing Strategies* is not a single plan with an overriding formal vision but instead is a different way of perceiving the problem of urban design and planning. Driving a wedge between the unfettered workings of the market and an untenable, anti-growth NIMBY-ism, *Developing Strategies* proposes that development is not a simple field, but an always complex situation determined by the strategies of various stakeholders, all of whom will hopefully find something of interest in this exhibit. A collaboration of experts and professionals from many disciplines with the residents, institutions and business-owners of the neighborhood has produced a set of programs and ideas that offer far more potential than anything any one group or designer could achieve.

Developing Strategies proposes a planning and design regime that is diffuse in its operations, modest in its claims, but ambitious and widespread in its scope. It emphasizes the importance of small gains, incremental change, and working relationships that connect often opposing interests. While the odds are long that any of these proposals will be implemented in the traditional sense, with bulldozers and cranes, we hope that they will come into play in a variety of other ways. Perhaps in a debate at the next HKNA meeting, or at a public hearing for a development proposal on Ninth Avenue, or in a discussion between architecture students surveying the garment district. Or perhaps most idealistically, in a collaboration between a developer looking for business opportunities, a community organization, and an urban designer.

What better place for a mixed-use district, a district of hybrid buildings and programs where trucks—not to mention pushcarts and horses—are already a common sight? Why not provide for light industrial spaces and incubators for new industry that need to be near the action of industry? How can technology-driven development mesh with existing industries such as printing, fashion and design which are struggling to survive increasing market pressure? Why not connect the Javits with the additional services it needs—literally attached like a new skin? Why not design a building that houses buses on weekdays and markets on weekends? Is it possible to provide new forms of live-work space for the new family types, new work types and new living situations—all of which are already abundant in Hell's Kitchen South—that require more flexible urban and architectural responses? Is it possible to build a variety of housing types in a neighborhood rather than overwhelm it with one type? The views and vistas created by the odd constructions of Port Authority, the Lincoln Tunnel and the Javits Center form a unique landscape that is as historic and valuable as any national park. Rather than filling up these unique bumps, gaps and breaks, can they accommodate new types of productive open space? A transportation park? Or perhaps a flea market for small start-up businesses not yet able to afford regular overhead? Why not connect through the Javits Center to the new Hudson River Park? Perhaps otherwise unusable rights-of-way can be used for green filters, bike trails and just places to sit?

-Design + Urbanism



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